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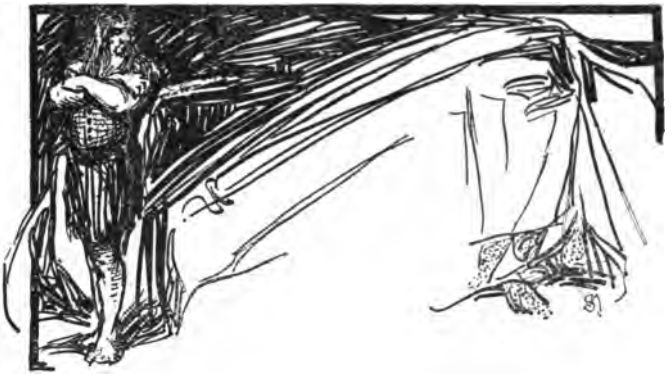

NORSE TALES RETOLD

I

HOW THE WORLD WAS MADE

A great many people believe a great many different things about who made the world, how it was made, and what happened immediately after it was finished. I am going to tell you what the old Norsemen believed about this very thing. We know exactly what they thought, because they wrote it in two big books.

They believed before this world was a world, there was a great, cold, icy plain in the north, miles and miles long, and a great red-hot plain in

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NORSE TALES RETOLD

NORSE TALES RETOLD

For Little Children and Others Who Care to Read Them

By

RITZA FREEMAN
and
RUTH DAVIS

CHICAGO
A. C. McCLURG & CO.
1912

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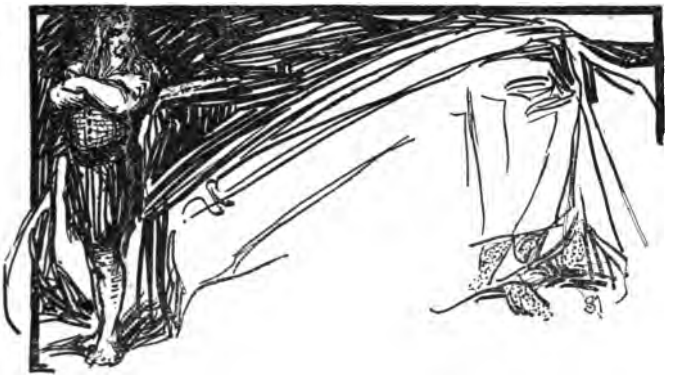
How the World Was Made



NORSE TALES RETOLD

I

HOW THE WORLD WAS MADE

A great many people believe a great many different things about who made the world, how it was made, and what happened immediately after it was finished. I am going to tell you what the old Norsemen believed about this very thing. We know exactly what they thought, because they wrote it in two big books.

They believed before this world was a world, there was a great, cold, icy plain in the north, miles and miles long, and a great red-hot plain in

the south, miles and miles long, and a big dark space in the centre, miles and miles deep. As these icy mists met this burning heat in mid-air, it would harden into great icicles and drop into the big hole in the middle until it formed the enormous frost giant Ymer, and a big cow who fed him with her milk.

This cow would stand and lick the icy, salty rock, until one day the hair of a man's head appeared. She kept on licking and he kept on growing, until the third day he was full-grown, and a fine-looking fellow, even if he was licked out of a salt rock. He and his three grandsons were the first of the gods.

Ymer never was an agreeable giant, and he grew meaner as he grew older, until at last there was no living with him, so the gods decided to kill him.

Now Ymer was the largest giant we know anything about. I am not positive of his exact size, but I think he was between twenty-five and fifty thousand miles high, and broad in proportion. After the gods had killed him, they thought it a

shame that so much raw material should go to waste, so they concluded to make a world of him. It was almost the only thing they could do with him. I want you to listen carefully, because I am going to tell you exactly how they did this, and if any of you ever kill a giant the size of Ymer and want to make a world of him, you will know how to go about it.

Out of his flesh they made the land, and turned the blood into water for the rivers and seas. The mountains they made from his bones, and the trees from his hair. His skull formed the sky and his brain the clouds. Then they took his eyebrows, and fastened them together and made a big serpent that would encircle the earth as a fortification, you know. Of course there were a few odds and ends of broken bits of bone, teeth, and so on, and they made pebbles and small stones of these and scattered them around, and the world was finished.

In the centre was a high mountain, and on top of the mountain was a great plain. Here the gods came to look at the earth. It was beautiful.

The trees were green, the waters sparkled like jewels, and flowers were everywhere. The sky was a deep blue, the kind that the longer you look at the bluer it gets, with little soft baby-clouds floating around. Oh, it was beautiful, and the gods were so pleased and so proud that they wanted some one else to enjoy it with them. So they took a stately ash and a splendid elm, and from them made a man and a woman. Then Odin, the king of the gods, said, "They and their children shall care for the earth, and we shall care for them," and they did.

The Building of Asgard

II

THE BUILDING OF ASGARD

You remember the terrible giant Ymer, whom the gods had to kill because he was so wicked that they simply could n't have him around, and afterwards, when they found him so much in the way and could n't imagine what to do with him, they finally just made a world of him,— you remember all that?

Well, before all this happened, the dreadful giant had many children, who were frost, and just common, ordinary giants, and who seemed likely to become as unendurable as their father. When Ymer was killed, all these bad giants were drowned except one, who, with his wife, ran,

panting and terrified, so fast and so far that none of the gods, who were otherwise engaged, could take time to attend to him.

When all was over, Odin, the king of the gods, looking about and seeing that all the wicked giants were done for except the one that they could not reach, said to his brothers, sons, and cousins, "Let us leave this place, for there is nothing else to do,— all our enemies are dead, or have run away. Let us not go north, into the night and cold, nor south, into the burning heat, but west, and find some goodly place to build a city for our home."

The others all agreed, so they started at once, and travelled far and far, day after day, week after week, month after month, until they came to a great, peaceful, grassy place by a lake, near which were wooded hills. All this just pleased them.

But at night, something seemed to be wrong,— the strangest, creepy, gusty winds — you can't imagine how mysterious and disturbing it was. It sounded like people creeping close, whisper-

ing and then rushing away and shouting tauntingly. No one could sleep, and Frigga, Odin's wife, you know, and the other ladies were most distressed, and the gods themselves thought it very strange.

Tyr, Odin's brave son, said, "I am going out to see what all this means."

His mother coaxed, "No, Tyr, I 'm certain there is danger,— it all sounds so unusual."

But Tyr said he was n't afraid, so out he went. He rushed furiously about among the shadows of the bushes and came back looking a trifle foolish, saying that it was strange, but he could find nothing amiss.

Over and over this happened, until at last, tired out, all slept but Odin, who never closed his eyes.

The next morning, all at once, the most terrific hurricane came rushing and tore up the tents and bushes, and whirled things right into the faces of the gods. Then Odin, knowing at last the meaning of all this commotion, stepped out and called into the storm, "Stop your rough playing, Vans,

and let us see you, and tell us what we have done to make you angry, that we may make it right."

At that moment the winds sank, and the Vans, who had caused all this disturbance, showed themselves. Their chief stepped up to Odin and said, "We know that you are gods and the masters of the earth, for we saw you kill that wicked giant, Ymer. We are masters of the air, and we thought that we 'd have great sport in fighting each other. But we are not angry, and if you don't feel like fighting, let 's shake hands."

So all the gods and all the Vans shook hands, and they had a celebration, for the gods were relieved that they had n't to fight any more just then. And they all liked the chief so much that they invited him to visit them, which he did. And he became so fond of them that he never went back to his own people, but sent for his son Frey and his daughter Freyja, gentle, beautiful, and golden-haired, whom all the gods came to love dearly.

One evening, as they were all talking together, Balder said, "Is n't it strange that we have never

seen any trace of that one giant who ran away from us that dreadful day?"

"Perhaps he has fallen into the great ocean and has died," Tyr said.

But the chief of the Vans said, "No, he is not dead. He lives in the far north in the gloom and cold beyond the sea, in Jotunheim. He has built castles there, and most of his children are more hideous than the ones who died, although one or two of the girls are really handsome. I am a poor sleeper, and have often gone up there at night, to pass away the time." (You know how fast a howling wind can travel.)

Frigga was frightened at once. "They will come again and kill the poor, weak people on earth, and perhaps even us," she cried, looking around at her dear ones, white and sick.

"No, indeed, they will not," said Odin, "for we will build a city here on this hill, and we will make it so strong that no giant can ever destroy it, and we will go out from here and fight the giants, and protect the helpless people on earth, as we promised."

Then they all set to work at once, to build their dear new home on the top of the mountain. They worked for months and months. Even the ladies helped where they could.

On the very highest point of the mountain they built a tall, tall throne, so high above everything else that Odin, when he sat there, could see all over the world, and know just what men were doing. Nobody else was ever even to go near this throne. Somebody did once,— but that's another story. Then they built two or three more great buildings, trying harder and harder to make them strong enough to keep out the giants without fail.

Then they went a long way off, to look at what they had built. It was beautiful, beautiful! And they named it "The City of Asgard," and promised each other to keep every evil thing from its streets. Then they went back and began their happy, busy lives in their stately city of Asgard.

Odin's Search for Wisdom

III

ODIN'S SEARCH FOR WISDOM

When the world was very young, and the trees and the grass and the sky were so new that you could see yourself in them, everybody had heaps of things to learn.

Odin, the king of the gods, felt that he needed more knowledge. He had much to attend to, and he wanted to do everything the very best way that it could be done so that he should be known as a great and wise ruler.

Now the giants, what there were left of them, were very old, and could remember things that had happened long before the gods were living.

The oldest and wisest of the giants was Mimer, who had a well containing magic water.

Everybody, you know, has one thing that he prizes more than anything else in the world,— one thing that he would not trade nor ever think of giving away. Mimer's dearest treasure was the water of the magic well. Oh, the waters of that well! Just thing of it! After one drink you knew everything that ever had happened or was ever going to happen, on land or sea. I don't blame Mimer for being stingy with such a marvellous possession.

Odin so longed to be wise that he travelled to this wonderful well, and stood by it, looking down into the clear, dark water.

"Give me one drink of this wonderful water, Mimer," begged Odin, "I need and want so to be wise."

"But I cannot give the water to every one who asks," said Mimer, "I can give it only to those who are willing to pay a great price."

"I will give you anything you ask,— anything!" said Odin, quickly, eagerly.

Mimer thought a moment. "You must give me one of your eyes," he said at last, slowly.

Quick as a flash, Odin snatched out an eye and gave it to Mimer, for you see, if he had waited, the giant might have raised the price. He was rather tricky.

After Odin had had the drink, he felt that it was worth all that he had paid, for he could see more with the one eye left him than he had ever seen with both. He knew that now he was far wiser than any other god or man. But he could not be quite sure about being wiser than the king of the frost giants, who had a great reputation for wisdom even among the gods. He was so very old that Odin felt that he might be able to remember a few things that would help him to be a better king, if he could come to know them.

This giant used to have question-matches with any one who would contest with him. The one who was able to ask a question that the other could not answer, won the match. The one who was beaten was never seen again. Up to this time, no one had ever beaten the giant, so you

see what a risk Odin took when he decided to go and have a question-match with him.

Frigga, his wife, pleaded with him not to go, and cried and cried, for she feared that he too would never come back. But Odin said that he must go, so he took off his long blue velvet mantle all covered with shiny stars, and laid aside his beautiful golden crown, sparkling with jewels, and journeyed to the home of the frost giant, and knocked at the door. He looked, not like a god, but like a man,— he had attended to that,— and that is what the giant thought he was, and was insulted to think of a mere man coming to contend with him.

"I 'll soon give you all the contest you want," he growled rudely and laughed so scornfully and so loudly that all the windows of his castle rattled, and the people in the valley thought it was thundering, and ran home. And he did n't even ask Odin to sit down,— just think of that!

Then he asked him, in a scornful, insulting way, a few questions that no mere man could have known, and Odin answered them without even

stopping to think. I wish you had seen that giant sit up and stare, and he gave a kind of great snort, as all frost giants do when excited, and stood up and dusted the chair next to his own, and said to Odin, "Will you not be seated?"

The hall of the giant's castle was miles long, and built of gray stone; and the huge windows had seats so wide that fifty children could sit in each one; the doorways were so wide that all the circus horses in the world could get through without crowding. The chairs were made of solid rock, and the footstools were great boulders.

Ah, that was a wonderful contest! They sat side by side and asked questions the whole afternoon and until long after the sun went down. At last the frost giant said, "I can think of nothing more to ask. I give up."

So Odin was the winner; the great Odin was now the king of wisdom as well as of goodness, over all men, giants, and gods. Was it not worth an eye?

How Odin Brought the Mead to Asgard

IV

HOW ODIN BROUGHT THE MEAD TO ASGARD

Do you remember the Vans, who made the gods so much trouble before they decided to be friends? Well, when the gods found that there was going to be no more war just then, and found also how much they liked the chief of the Vans and his children, they were so glad and so relieved that they wanted to make something to celebrate.

Now it happened that in the open space between the gods and the Vans stood a great earthen

jar. When they were looking around for something to celebrate with, they noticed this.

"Let us melt up this jar and make something different from the clay, to remember this good day by," said one.

So they did, and began working with it, trying to think what to make. When you have clay or putty or mud to play with, don't you always make a man? That's just what the gods did. Odin did most of it, and he got interested, and all the rest gathered closely around and looked silently over his shoulder, for they could see that something remarkable was happening. Odin worked and worked, and he did his very best, and when he had finished, the man looked ready to speak. And, while the others watched breathlessly, Odin breathed gently into the face of the man he had made, and the man — what *do* you think? — he breathed, and presently began to move about and to act just as one of themselves. They called him Koaser, and I wish we had known him. He was the gentlest, wisest man, and the kindest. The gods,— how they loved

him! You see, he belonged to them, as no other man did. And then he was *so* good.

Part of the time he lived in Asgard, but he was a great traveller, a poet, and a story-teller. Everywhere he went, people were glad to see him. The little children ran to meet him and hung on him and begged him for stories. He always made people happier and better, wiser and kinder.

One day, as he was walking alone in a lonely valley near the sea, he passed the home of two tiny, cruel dwarfs, who hated him because every one else loved him,— just like a dwarf!

One saw him coming and called softly, "Brother, brother, here's that wise man who makes rhymes and thinks he knows so much more than any one else."

The other came running, looked at the kind face, and whispered, "Listen! We have him here alone; let's kill him, and then see how much good his wisdom will do him!"

So they interrupted his beautiful thoughts, saying, "Koaser, there is a question we have

been wishing to ask you for months. No one else knows, and we are *so* anxious to have your opinion. Will you walk along here, where we won't be disturbed, and help us think it out?" And Koaser, always wishing to help, went unsuspectingly with them. When they had come to the darkest part of the valley, the little wretches slipped behind him and struck him in the back with a knife, and killed him, the miserable, cowardly dwarfs!

Then they caught his blood in two stone jars and a stone kettle, and mixed it with the honey of flowers, made by the bees in the golden sunshine, and so the wonderful mead was made.

The cruel dwarfs gloated over the evil they had done, and were so proud of it that in a day or two, when they found a giant lying asleep, a giant who had never harmed them,— whom they did not even know,— they killed him too, just to be doing something mean.

But the giant's son found out about it, and you should have heard him rage! He did n't want to soil his hands killing them, so he carried

them out in a boat to a rock that the tide covered when it was high, and rowed away leaving them to drown, but they begged so piteously, and looked so little, that he was ashamed. They promised him anything, even the wonderful mead, if he would take them back to land, so at last, when the rock was almost covered, he did, and took the mead, and put it in his cave, and told his daughter to watch it night and day. You see he knew what a precious drink this mead was. That night up in Asgard, the gods spoke of Koaser, wondering where he was, and saying how much they loved him. Odin looked sad and stern, for he knew,— he had been on his throne when it happened.

One day Odin disappeared, and when the gods missed him, they said, "He has gone to get all that is left of our dear poet." And so he had.

He looked just like a man, as he always did on these journeys. He walked and walked and walked until he came to a field where the giant's brother and his nine men were mowing grass. The men were hot and dusty and their scythes

were dull. Odin said, "My good men, you are hot and tired. Let me whet your scythes, and perhaps your work will be easier."

In a moment the whole valley rang with the quick strokes, and the sparks flew about like fireworks. The men could hardly believe it when they found that the mowing was easy as easy could be with their sharp scythes. Of course they all wanted the whetstone. Odin wanted to be fair, so he said, "The man that can catch it can have it," and threw it into their midst. They fought like mad over it, and were so angry with each other that they cut each other up.

When the giant saw his nine men lying dead in the field, he said, "This is a fine state of affairs, I must say. Who will mow my meadow now? I wish I had never laid eyes on you and your old whetstone."

Odin said, "I will mow your meadow for you and do it better than your nine men, if you will help me get a drink of mead from your brother's cave." The giant was a little bothered when he heard Odin mention the mead. He did

not suppose any one knew about it, but it was no time for argument. The field needed mowing. So he consented to help Odin get a drink of mead after all the work was done.

"I guess I made a pretty good bargain, after all," thought the giant. "We 'll never get the mead, and I 'll get my work done for nothing."

All the rest of the summer and fall, Odin did the work of nine men. When the crops were all gathered, he went for his pay.

"We 'll go and ask my brother about the mead," said the giant. "He is most choice of it. I 've never even had a smell."

Now this was the very first that the brother had heard of the bargain, and he said at once, crossly, "No, indeed. It 's no bargain of mine, and you don't get a single drop!" and away he stamped.

"Well," said Odin, "you promised to help me, and help me you must. Take this auger and bore a hole through the stone wall of the cave."

The giant smiled when he saw Odin take a tiny auger, about as big as your little finger, from

his pocket and hand it to him. He took it without saying a word, and began to bore through the rock. Imagine his surprise when the chips flew right and left! Before he could count twenty, the auger was through the rock wall.

While the giant was boring the hole, Odin made himself so tiny that he could climb the wall and creep right through the hole before the giant realized what was going on. He jabbed at him with his auger, but was too late.

Inside the cave, Odin changed into a young and handsome man, which surprised the giant's daughter, who was guarding the mead. What he said to the girl no one knows, except the bee, and if some day you get a bee to tell you what he says to the flower before she gives him a sip of honey, you will know exactly what Odin said to the maiden before she would promise him three sips of the mead she was to guard so carefully. They certainly were the most wonderful sips, for the first one emptied one jar, the second sip finished the second jar — zip! The maiden sat with her eyes popping out of her head — surely

it could not be true — yes, it was! The third sip took every drop in the kettle!

Then the young man became a great, splendid eagle, and soared right through the window, up, up, up, into the sky. Higher and higher flew the majestic bird, faster, faster, in circles that swept around the tops of the mountains, until at last he dropped over the gates of the city of Asgard.

So Odin carried all that was left of the poet he so loved to Asgard.

The Dwarfs

V

THE DWARFS

Before there were any men and women in the world, the gods took some earth and from it made little creatures that acted and thought and looked like men, except that they were very small. They were not good little people,— they were ugly and idle and mischievous. They did nothing but torment people, who were not wise enough to understand them and their ways.

Do you remember those two wicked dwarfs who killed the gentle poet, and afterward, just for meanness, the giant? Well, at that very time, Odin was sitting on his throne, watching,

and with his own eyes saw it all. He had seen them do many mischievous things before, but when they got to killing people, something had to be done.

So Odin sent a messenger, saying, " Go down to the earth, and tell all the dwarfs that Odin, on his throne in Asgard, wishes to speak to them." The messenger hastened off, and Odin watched for his return.

The dwarfs had been having trouble. The son of the giant they had killed had threatened to drown them, and had made them give him the golden mead. So when Odin's messenger came, some were more frightened than ever, some were pleased to have a chance to see Asgard and Odin's throne, and some, bolder and more wicked than the others, laughed loudly and seemed proud of their wickedness, like very naughty children. But they all came trooping along after the messenger, scampering, whispering, nudging one another, asking what was going to happen to them.

When they had swarmed up to the foot of the

throne, Odin looked at them sternly, wondering how he could make them sorry for their wickedness.

"Where is Koaser, the gentle poet?" he asked at last.

The cruel little people laughed as if it were a joke, and the two that had killed him said, "Oh, he choked to death,—choked on his own wisdom!" and laughed hideously.

Then Odin saw that there was no doing anything for them. "You wicked, lying little creatures!" he thundered. "I saw your deed with my own eyes. You are full of evil. Now the time of your punishment has come!"

The dwarfs looked at one another. Some looked much frightened, many looked quite pleased, and some in their hardness even laughed.

Then Odin told them that they should never again see the light of the sun. Some of the worst must forever feed the great fires in the centre of the earth. The others must work in caves with metals, and must serve the gods in any way they could. They might come up at night, provided

they did no harm. but never again while the sun shone.

Then the messenger took them away to their dark homes, where they worked ever after. Some by the aid of magic made wonderful things, but none ever harmed the people of the earth again.

The Wooing of Gerd

VI

THE WOOING OF GERD

When gods are idle they get into trouble like other folks, and this is what happened to Frey one day when he wanted to mind some one else's business.

Odin had left his throne for a few minutes, and Frey, being idle, climbed up to see how the world looked from the throne of the king of the gods. Away over where the great black cliffs stood all along the coast like soldiers was the home of the frost giants. As Frey looked, a beautiful maiden came out of one of the houses and stood for a minute on the porch, then went

in and shut the door. Frey saw her for only a minute but that was enough for him to know that she was the maiden he wanted for his wife. She was the daughter of a frost giant, so for the life of him he could not see how the wedding was to be arranged. He was most perplexed.

For days he neither ate, slept, nor spoke, but went about looking as though he had lost his last friend, until all the gods wondered what had come over the light-hearted Frey. One day Skirmer, his best friend, asked to share his trouble and Frey told him about the beautiful maiden, and that he would never be happy again until she was his wife.

"If that's all, it's easily managed," said Skirmer. "Give me your swiftest horse that can ride through fire and water, and the sword that swings itself when opposed by giants, and I'll bring her to you."

Gladly Frey gave Skirmer the horse that could go through fire and water, and the sword that swung itself when giants opposed it, and away he rode. That was a great ride! All night long

the horse galloped as hard as he could over the hard road, and sparks flew at every step. Faster and faster, through fire and water the good steed flew. Those who saw him on that great ride say he looked like a streak of lightning.

When they reached the giant's home, fierce dogs rushed out and howled as though they would tear Skirmer and his horse to pieces. But the brave horse and rider had been through too much to be frightened by dogs, and Skirmer's voice rang out clear and loud. Above all the noise the beautiful maiden heard him.

"What is the trouble?" she asked. "The earth shakes and the house trembles."

The serving maids told her that a great warrior was outside and wished to see her. So more out of curiosity than anything else, Skirmer was invited into the house.

When he told her about Frey and his great love for her, it made no impression upon her.

"I will not go," was Gerd's only answer.

"See, lovely maiden. This wonderful ring, which every ninth night drops eight other rings

as handsome as itself, shall be yours if you will go," said Skirmer.

"I have gold enough, and want no more," said Gerd, proudly.

"Then," said Skirmer, "look at this flashing sword. If you will not return with me, I 'll sever your head from your body."

Gerd smiled a scornful smile. She knew that she was the daughter of a giant.

Skirmer changed his method. He drew a magic wand, fixed his eyes on her face, and in a solemn voice, as he waved it over Gerd, chanted a mystic hymn. Nobody knows to this day what the words of that hymn were. Some say he told her of all the awful things that would happen to her if she did not go, but I don't believe it. I 've always thought that as Skirmer walked and rode up and down in front of Gerd, he used his magic power to show her the beauties of Asgard, the noble, helpful lives of the gods, and the wonder of having the great god Frey for her husband. Those who saw her at the time say that a soft light seemed to steal over her, and when she raised her

face it was so sweet and gentle that they hardly knew her. Be that as it may, Gerd promised to meet Frey in nine days in the groves near there, and Skirmer mounted his horse and rode away to take the good news to his friend.

" She is yours," he shouted when he was a long way off. " In nine days she will meet you in the groves of Jotunheim."

Can you imagine Frey's joy, and how anxiously he waited for the nine days to pass, and how joyful was the wedding, and how happily they lived forever afterward?

The Making of the Hammer

VII

THE MAKING OF THE HAMMER

Loke was the god who was always making trouble in Asgard. Whenever things were running smoothly, it irritated him. He never saw anything beautiful or happy without wanting in some way to destroy it.

One day, when Thor was away fighting the enemies of the gods, Loke passed by his palace. Through the door he saw Sif, Thor's beautiful wife, asleep in her chair,— it was a warm, sunny day. Her wonderful golden hair hung quite to the floor. Loke knew how Thor loved that sunny head, and, just to play a trick, he slipped in, still

as a shadow, cut off those shining strands, and carried them away.

By and by Sif awoke. How queer her head felt! She raised her hands to see what was wrong, and —. Well, she cried and cried and cried. You see, Thor loved her hair so much that she was afraid he would never love her without it. The more the poor lady thought about it, the more she cried.

Presently Thor came striding in, frightened because, for the first time, Sif was not at the door to meet him. He searched frantically all through the place, calling everywhere, "Sif! Sif! Where are you?" At last he came upon her all in a heap behind a pillar, her pretty eyes swollen, her poor shorn head in her hands.

Thor coaxed the story out of her, and when he knew — whew! It was worse than a cyclone. No one ever cared to see Thor angry.

"I know who did the cowardly deed!" he roared, and he stormed out of the palace, too raging to even say good-bye to poor, heart-broken Sif.

He found Loke and choked the life nearly out of him, and probably would have done so had not Loke, with chattering teeth, gasped, "I did it — I did it just for fun. If you 'll let me go, I 'll get the dwarfs to make her some more hair even more beautiful, indeed I will!" Thor saw that he was so thoroughly frightened that he would do as he promised, so at last he dropped the wretched creature, who scurried away, too much frightened for once to think of swaggering.

He hurried underground to the dwarfs called the sons of Ivald, who were wonderful workers in metals.

"Make me a crown of golden hair that will grow, and I 'll give you anything you want," said Loke.

The dwarfs whispered together a moment, then hurried away. Loke sat in the darkness and waited. He did n't dare to show his face in Asgard without the hair.

By and by the dwarfs brought the hair, and a magic ship and a spear for good measure, and

to show what they could do, Loke took them to Asgard, and now began boasting, as usual.

"Why, you can't imagine," he said, "anything like it. They do the most wonderful work in metals! All the other dwarfs don't amount to one, two, three compared to them. They are the dwarfs, and no mistake about it."

Now it happened that the dwarf Brock was standing near, and, as his brother Sindre was a most cunning workman, it made him angry to hear Loke boast of the work of Ivald's sons.

"Why, Loke," he said, "You have never seen a metal worker unless you have seen my brother Sindre. He is not a blacksmith, but a real metal worker. If you 'd see his work once, you 'd not talk about the sons of Ivald."

Loke laughed and said, "It 's mighty strange, if your brother is such a wonder, that no one ever heard of him," which was not true, as Sindre was a famous metal worker, and Brock, much insulted, said so, and several things beside.

"Well," jeered Loke, "If your precious brother can make anything so wonderful as the

things the sons of Ivald made me, he can have my head!"

Of course Loke was only boasting, but before the words were fairly out of his mouth, Brock almost flew to his brother's workshop. You see, the family honor was at stake.

When Brock had told him all, Sindre thought in silence a moment. Then he set to work, without a word to poor Brock about what he intended to do.

I wish I could tell you how the smithy looked, but there never was a photograph made of it. I should judge from the description that it was a queer, dark cave, with piles of strange-looking tools in heaps around the shadowy sides, and a great roaring furnace in the centre,— pitch darkness everywhere but in the red firelight.

Sindre said, "Brock, it will take the two of us to get the best of this braggart Loke. If you do just as I tell you, we can do it. Your part is to blow the bellows. That 's easy, you see, but you must not stop a second. Just blow steadily, but if you want Loke's head, *don't* stop."

When the coals were red, he took a piece of skin and laid it on the flames. Brock blew steadily, but a big fly kept buzzing around, and stung him on the hand. The pain was awful, but Brock did not stop. When Sindre came back, he took from the furnace a golden boar. Brock looked at it doubtfully.

"It's pretty, Sindre," he said, "but are you sure the gods will care for a boar? Thor has his goats, and Freyja her cats, and Odin his magic horse,— do you suppose they will think that wonderful enough?"

Sindre fairly snorted. "You attend to your blowing, stupid," he snapped, "and don't talk about what you don't understand. I tell you that's a *magic* boar. You leave all that to me, and you just attend to the bellows." So Brock, much ashamed, went on blowing.

Then Sindre put a lump of gold on the furnace, and went out. Brock blew and blew, but in came that annoying fly, and, after buzzing about importantly a few minutes, settled on the back of Brock's neck, and stung. He could have

screamed with pain, but he set his teeth and blew right on. Presently Sindre returned, and took a ring from the fire. Brock looked startled, remembered how he had been snubbed, but desperately broke out, "A ring! Oh, Sindre! They don't need *rings,*— you should see Asgard, and Sif's jewels!"

But Sindre fairly howled at him, "*Will* you be still, and not get yourself disliked by talking nonsense?" he cried. "You don't know what this ring can do. You bother me with your silly fussing, and I have enough on my mind as it is!" So Brock, very red, subsided.

This time Sindre put some iron on the fire, and hurried out. Brock blew, but there came that fly again to torture him. You may entertain your own opinion about that fly, but I firmly believe that Loke, worried about his precious head, had followed, and was doing his best to spoil the work. This time he settled between Brock's eyes, and stung until the blood came. Wild with pain, he raised his hand to brush it off, and Sindre rushed in.

"You stupid," he raged, "see what you have done! You have nearly ruined this hammer. The handle is fully an inch too short! Why did n't you blow as I told you?"

"Hammer!" groaned poor nervous Brock, "Oh, Sindre, *why* did you make a hammer? I don't think much of a hammer myself, and what *will* the judges say?"

"There you go again," growled Sindre. "Can't you trust me? Don't you think I 'm as anxious to get even with that rascally Loke as you are? Listen, now, and I 'll tell you what the things are good for, then take them to Asgard, and bring me that knave's head."

When Brock came through the gates of Asgard, all the gods came hurrying and crowding to see who had won. Odin, Thor, and Frey were chosen judges. Brock said, "Let Loke tell what his things are good for first." So Loke began:

"This spear will never miss the mark, no matter who throws it, or how badly he aims," and he gave it to Odin.

Then, taking out the golden hair, he said, "This hair is made of spun gold, and it will

grow, just like real hair," and gave it to Thor, who immediately placed it on Sif's head. It began to grow at once, and Sif was happy. Then Loke continued:

"This is a magic ship. It will sail when there is no wind, or even a strong wind against it. No sea can harm it, and it is so wonderfully made that it can be folded and carried in your smallest pocket." He gave it to Frey, then added, hatefully, "Now, Brock, we will have time to look at your nice little trinkets."

Brock stepped proudly forward.

"This ring," he said, "every ninth night will cast off eight other gold rings, each as beautiful as itself." He gave it to Odin, while the gods marvelled, for it was a beauty.

"This boar has bristles of solid gold," went on Brock. "It can run faster than the swiftest horse, on land or sea, or in the air; and its golden bristles shine so in the dark that it becomes as light as day." This he gave to Frey, and the gods all said, "Oh!"

Brock continued, "Here is a hammer. It will crush the biggest and hardest rock in the

world at a single blow; and no matter how hard you throw it, it comes right back to your hand. It is large, but it can be folded into a tiny package. Sindre thought you might find it useful, Thor. One thing I 'm sorry about,— the handle is a trifle too short. We had an accident." And he glared at Loke.

Thor, pleased and proud, stepped back and gave it a mighty swing. The thunder roared, the lightning flashed, and the clouds piled high in the sky. Then the gods saw that the hammer would be the greatest protection against their enemies, and the judges agreed that Brock had won.

Then Brock said to Loke, "I 'll trouble you for your head."

"Take it," Loke said, "but you dare not touch my neck, for that does not belong to you."

Brock was almost beside himself with rage, for of course he could n't cut off his head without touching his neck. But I 'll tell you what he did do. He sewed the lips tightly together, and stopped Loke's boasting for a time.

The Apples of Idun

VIII

THE APPLES OF IDUN

One day Odin, Loke, and Hoemer started on a journey, and everything went wrong. Even gods have unlucky days. They had started before breakfast, and had walked until evening without anything to eat. They were hungry and tired. Just as they were beginning to think everything was against them, they saw a fine herd of cattle. It did not take long to kill an ox and put it in a big pot over a fire. Their bad luck stayed with them. The meat would not cook. They built a bigger fire, and the flames roared around the pot, but every time they raised

the lid the meat was raw. As they sat watching the fire, they looked up into the tree, and there sat a great eagle.

"If you give me my fill, I 'll make the pot boil," said the eagle.

"Surely," said Odin. "My fine bird, you may have your fill if you will only make this pot boil."

Soon the eagle said that the meat was done and ready to eat, and that he would take both shoulders and both legs. That was a pretty big share, and Loke, who was always greedy, was angry when he saw the eagle eat the best of the ox. So he took a big pole and began to beat the bird. You never can imagine what happened. It makes me feel queer to think of it. The eagle took his end of the pole, and before Loke could loosen his grasp he carried him high up in the clouds. Think how he must have felt away up in the sky hanging to the end of a pole and being carried along by an eagle! If it had been any one but Loke, I would be sorry. Loke realized that this was no ordinary, everyday eagle, but

a giant in eagles' feathers. The eagle flew low for Loke to hit the tops of all the high mountains, and he was pretty well battered up. He pleaded with the eagle to let him go, but the giant said he never would, unless Loke would promise to give him the apples of Idun from Asgard. Of course Loke promised. He was always ready to promise anything if it would help him out of any difficulty. I don't know of another god in Asgard that would have promised such a thing.

The apples of Idun — Loke hardly realized what his promise meant until he was back in Asgard. The apples of Idun — the most wonderful fruit in the world! No one was ever allowed to touch them but the fair goddess Idun, and every morning she gave each of the gods some of the fruit for breakfast. It kept them young and beautiful. It made them strong and happy. Without these wonderful apples the gods would grow old, like men. The apples of Idun — how was he to get them? It bothered even cunning Loke.

One morning when Idun was taking the fruit out of the golden casket, Loke walked carelessly by and said, "You know, I 've never seen more beautiful fruit — until the other day."

Ah, cunning Loke! Of course Idun was interested, and wanted to know where he had seen any fruit that could compare with this.

"Oh, a tree by the gate. Put on your hat if you want to see them. It is only a few minutes' walk. You would better put your apples in your apron so we can compare the fruits."

Idun thought of no harm to herself or her apples, and walked out to the gate. Just as she reached the border of Asgard, a fierce wind swept by, and before she could make a sound, a huge eagle had carried her and her apples away.

The next morning the gods missed their fruit, but they did not think much about it. But when several mornings passed without a sign of Idun or her apples, they became alarmed. A glance at each other's faces showed them that they were growing old. As time went on and their youth left them, they held a sort of general meeting to

talk it over. Everybody felt that Loke had something to do with it, for he was the only troublesome god. He finally confessed, but promised to bring Idun and her apples back if Freyja would lend him her falcon skin. Of course she gave it to him, and the last they saw of Loke was a tiny speck flying in the distance.

They watched the sky for days and days. After a long time they saw a falcon with a tiny nut in his claws being chased by an eagle. It was a hard race, but the falcon won by about a foot. As he flew over the gates of Asgard, they saw that it was Loke, with Idun and her golden apples changed into a nut. They built a huge fire and destroyed the eagle, and then turned their attention to Idun and Loke. Loke had much to tell of his hardships and of what a trying race it was, but nobody wanted to listen to him. They felt that he deserved all his trouble.

The gods crowded around Idun while she spread her feast, and watched with delight their faces grow young again and their limbs strong as they once more ate the golden apples of Idun.

How Thor Found His Hammer

IX

HOW THOR FOUND HIS HAMMER

The frost giants and the gods never liked one another very well, and the frost giants were always scheming how they could get into Asgard. They had it all figured out that Thor's hammer was the only real danger that they had to fear. If they could only get that hammer some way or other, then the beautiful city of Asgard was in their power. The frost giants were wise and knew heaps about magic, and one day when Thor was sleeping they stole his hammer from his side.

Can't you shut your eyes and see the god Thor

when he awoke and missed his hammer? His eyes flashed fire, his red beard trembled, and his voice was so fierce that it shook the walls of the city.

"Loke!" he cried, "Loke, the rascals have stolen my hammer. Without it we are lost. Think quickly. What shall we do?"

The quick-witted Loke said he would have to borrow Freyja's falcon skin, and fly to the home of the frost giants, and find out what they wanted for the hammer.

It took only a few minutes to get the falcon skin. It fitted Loke as though it were made for him, and as he had worn it several times he knew exactly where his arms and legs went and how to button it. Then away flew Loke over mountains and valleys, across rivers and seas, until he came to the home of the frost giants.

"Well, Loke, how are you?" said the king of the frost giants. "How are the gods getting along?"

"They're not getting along very well since you stole Thor's hammer," said Loke, determined

not to waste any words, "and I 've come to find it."

"Well, you 'll have considerable trouble, for I 've buried it eight miles underground, and I 'll never give it up until you bring me Freyja to be my wife."

The giant looked as though he meant every word he said, and Loke thought it a waste of time to talk any longer, so he flew to Asgard and told Thor the news.

"Come, Freyja," said Thor, "put on your best dress. The frost giant wants you for his bride."

Thor was much mistaken if he thought Freyja intended to be the bride of any giant. She stamped her foot and grew red in the face, and pulled so hard at her beads that the string broke and scattered them all over the ground.

"If you think I am going to be handed from one giant to another whenever you are stupid enough to lose your hammer, you were never more mistaken in your life. Don't speak to me!" and she went into the house and banged

the door, leaving Thor to wonder what he had said to make her so angry.

"Well, Loke, what shall we do now? I can't understand women," said Thor.

"We must have the hammer at once. The only way I can see out of it is for you to dress as a woman, and I 'll go with you as your maid, and we 'll fool the giant."

"I 'd make a pretty woman, would n't I?" scoffed Thor. "Why, they 'd know me for a man a mile off, and besides, it would be making a fool of me instead of the giant. Everybody would be laughing at me. I won't think of it!"

Loke soon made him see that it was the only thing to do and that there was no time to lose. Soon they set off, Loke in a plain brown stuff dress as a serving maid, Thor in a beautiful purple velvet gown as the goddess Freyja. His hair was braided and hung with ropes of pearls. Jewels glittered on his arms and neck, and a long, white bridal veil hung over his face. Both rode fiery steeds.

When they reached the home of the giants

there was great rejoicing, and the giants prepared a feast to celebrate the wedding. They had oxen and boars roasted whole, peacocks, pigeons, and all kinds of fowl and fish, besides fruits and cakes in abundance. In the centre was a great bridal cake, twenty feet high and as wide as this room, covered with icing and surrounded by a hundred pink candles all ablaze.

The giant was astonished when he saw how much his bride ate. Thor always had a good appetite, and this day he ate a whole ox, eight large salmon, and heaps of cakes with icing. Loke explained to the giant that the goddess had not eaten for eight days, and that pleased the giant, for he felt that it was a compliment.

"Bring the hammer," said the giant, "that the wedding may be completed."

Loke and Thor were so excited that they could hardly keep still,— in a few minutes they would have the hammer. You see they had been on pins and needles during the feast for fear some one would discover that they were not women. Thor had not spoken one word, because he could

not make his voice soft enough, and Loke had been so frightened that he turned pale when he saw him eating so much. "Surely," thought Loke, "the giants will know that this is no woman," after he had eaten his sixth salmon. But everything had gone well, and in a few minutes the hammer would be in Thor's hand.

Soon the hammer was brought and laid in Thor's lap, and everybody stood around in groups to see the wedding ceremony. Just as the musicians began playing the wedding march, Thor took a firm hold of the hammer with one hand, tore his bridal veil off with the other, and in a loud voice defied all the giants. Swinging the hammer around his head, Thor took Loke, and together they made their escape, while the thunder crashed and rolled, and the giants ran one way and another in surprise and anger.

They went in great haste to Asgard and placed the hammer in a safe place, amid the great rejoicing of the gods. Then they both lay down for a much needed rest, for it had been a hard and trying day.

The Binding of the Wolf

X

THE BINDING OF THE WOLF

Though Loke was a god and lived in Asgard, yet in many ways he was like the giants. One day he went to the home of the frost giants and married a terrible giantess. They had three children, each more horrible and repulsive than the others.

Not long after this, when Odin was sitting upon his throne looking over the world, he saw the children of Loke. They were so powerful that he knew they would soon make trouble for gods and men, so he sent a messenger to bring them to Asgard. It was an awful sight when

Loke's children were brought to the home of the gods. One Odin put into the house of the wicked dead, one he chained to the sea, but the Fenris wolf did not seem very harmful, so he was allowed to stay in Asgard, and the god Tyr fed and cared for him.

You know how it is — when anything is with you every day, it is hard to notice any change. That was the way it was with the gods and the Fenris wolf. Tyr fed him and they all played with him without realizing how strong and vicious he was growing.

But Odin could see away down the future with that one eye of his, and he knew that unless they did something to the Fenris wolf he would soon be stronger than they. So he talked with the rest of the gods, and they too saw that the Fenris wolf was a dangerous beast to have walking about the streets of Asgard.

"See this wolf," they said to one another, "Unless we bind him he will destroy us and our city. We must have a great chain. But where will we get it? We have nothing here that would

come anywhere near holding him. Thor, you make us an iron chain."

So Thor built a great fire in his smithy, and all night long the blows rang on the anvil. In the morning he had a mighty iron chain forged. Then the gods called the Fenris wolf and showed him the chain, saying, "I don't suppose you could break it, could you, Fenrir?"

The wolf knew exactly what was going on in their minds, but he knew his own strength better than they did. He knew that it would be child's play for him to break the chain, so he consented to be bound. Thor fastened the chain about his legs and over his back, and riveted the ends together until it would seem that no one on earth could ever break it. When he was all through, the wolf gave a yawn and a stretch, and the chain broke into a hundred pieces.

The gods looked at one another and then at the pieces of iron, and Odin said, "He is stronger than we thought."

"I was never more surprised in my life," said Tyr.

When it was finished they wrapped it in the skin of a rabbit, and without stopping to look at the size of the package, Skirmer hurried to Asgard.

The gods were surprised when they unwrapped the skin and saw the tiny silken cord the dwarfs had sent, but Odin said it was a magic cord made of the footfall of cats, the roots of stones, the breath of a baby, and other things that no one but a dwarf could use, and that nothing could break it.

The gods all went to a rocky island and took Fenrir with them. Thor showed him the tiny thread and said, "Fenrir, everybody is talking about your great strength. You have been able to break the strongest iron chain I could make. Now a friend of mine made this cord, and said you could never break it. I think you can, but it is a good deal stouter than it looks. It fooled me at first. We have all tried to break it and can't, but that is no sign that you are as weak as we are. I, for one, believe you can break it."

The wolf was wise and did not want to allow

himself to be bound, but when they laughed at him and told him he was afraid, it made him angry.

"I am no coward," said Fenrir, "but there is something queer about that chain. I 'll allow myself to be tied all right if one of you will put your right hand in my mouth while you are fastening the cord."

The gods looked at one another. They knew Fenrir had to be bound, but it meant the loss of the right hand of one of them. Then Tyr, the good and fearless, said, "My right hand fed him and helped the monster to grow strong. My right hand shall go into his mouth."

They bound the tiny thread about Fenrir, over and over his shoulders, around and around his legs; then they tied the ends together and fastened them to a rock. The wolf threw himself against the rocks, tore from side to side, glared at them with his fiery eyes, and leaped again, but he could never get free.

This is how Tyr, the great god Tyr, lost his right hand.

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The Death of Balder

XI

THE DEATH OF BALDER

Balder was the most beautiful of the gods. He was so pure that no evil thought could live in his presence. Wherever he went, the sun shone and the flowers bloomed. All heaven seemed to smile on the place where Balder stood. He was the favorite of the gods, and they all dearly loved him. They would gladly have laid down their lives for him. I mean all but Loke, who never cared for any one but himself.

Odin had known for a long time that the gods could not live forever. He saw the shadows

falling and the signs of the last great day approaching.

One day Idun went to the gates of the city and lay down in the last great sleep. Her apples of youth died with her, and her husband, the god of poetry, could no longer sing with Idun, so he too passed away.

Asgard was indeed a sad place; youth and song were both gone. The joy of all living for the gods was in Balder. They watched his face with anxious eyes. At the first sign of trouble on his beautiful countenance, they were all alarmed and wanted to know the cause. When he told them that for several nights he had dreamed that he must leave them, their grief was heartbreaking.

Odin went at once to the city of the dead to see if they were preparing for Balder, and Balder's mother went over the whole world to make everything promise not to harm him.

When Odin reached the quiet city, he saw a beautiful couch draped with flowers and hung with gold and silver.

"For whom do you prepare this stately couch?" he asked the wisest woman of all the city.

"For the great god Balder," she answered. "He will soon be with us."

In the meantime Balder's mother had made the wind and the rain, every stick, rock, and tree in the world, promise not to harm Balder. Everything loved him, so all were glad to shield him. All the earth and sky wanted to help Balder's mother, but she forgot to get the promise of a little shrub called mistletoe. It was so small, it seemed foolish to think of it doing any harm to anybody.

When Odin returned to Asgard, he saw that the light had returned to Balder's face. Because nothing in the world could harm him, the gods made him stand in the centre while they formed a circle around him, and threw all kinds of weapons and pebbles for the mere joy of seeing them glance off of his shining body. Oh, the happiness of seeing that nothing could harm their loved one! They were all merry, and Balder

laughed gayly as the swords, spears, and battle-axes were thrown at him.

Loke stood at the edge of the circle eaten up with jealousy. He was the only one that knew about the mistletoe. He had a little spray in his hand, and he asked the god standing next to him why he did not throw something at Balder and join the sport.

"I've nothing to throw," said the god, "besides the light surrounding him blinds me."

"Throw this," said Loke, handing him the mistletoe and the god, thinking no harm, threw it straight at Balder's heart. It pierced him like a dart, and he fell dead.

The gods could scarcely realize what had happened. When they did, their grief was terrible. A shadow came over the sun, the birds stopped singing, the flowers were all blighted as though a frost had touched them. The gods were horrified. They could not move. Then they wept as they never had wept before, and Odin sat apart with his mantle over his head, for he knew that the end of the gods was near.

They dressed Balder's beautiful form in his finest linen and carried him on board his ship that lay right at the water's edge. When his wife saw him lying in state, her heart broke and she died, and they laid her beside her husband.

I wish I could tell you of the wonders of that funeral. The ship slowly sailed out to sea, while Odin, Frey, Freyja, Gerd, Thor, Sif, Tyr, Skirmer, and all the others stood on the shore and wept tears of pure gold. Everything was so still that you could have heard your own heart beat as they watched the ship become smaller and smaller. Then a strange and glorious sight met their eyes. A great light filled the skies, and they saw that the ship was all aflame. Brighter and brighter grew the light, farther and farther sailed the ship, until it looked like a ball of living fire in the distance. Long after sundown the last faint, red glow of Balder's ship sailing out to the unknown seas could be seen.

Balder never came back, and the hearts of the gods were heavy and lonely, for they knew that the last great day was near.

How Loke was Punished

XII

HOW LOKE WAS PUNISHED

Many people think that they can do anything wicked that comes into their minds and never be punished. Loke seemed to be of that opinion, and for a while he was left to do as he pleased, but in the end his evil ways overtook him, and Loke, like every other wicked person, was punished.

After the death of Balder, the gods took no more joy in Asgard. They seldom had great games or feasts, though they often went to the homes of their friends. One day, when they were all together trying to be merry, a fine

feast was spread. As they ate, they forgot for a minute the sorrow that lay over the world. They began to tell of each other's great deeds, but no one had a good word for Loke. He became black with rage, and when he could contain himself no longer, he stamped his foot and began to call all the gods vile names. He told the little failings of each, and cursed all gods until Thor took his hammer, swung it about his head and threatened Loke's life. In the storm that followed, Loke made his escape. He was afraid of the wrath of the gods whom he had betrayed and insulted.

He wandered from place to place, hoping to throw the gods off the track, until he came to a deep valley where no one had ever lived. Here he built a house with windows on all four sides, so that no one could come up without being seen.

Days and weeks passed, and Loke began to think that he was to escape punishment. As his mind became more at rest, he looked about for some way to amuse himself. He always liked to

go fishing, and as there was a fine stream near his house, he thought that he would spin a little flax and weave a fish net.

He was so excited over the prospect of a good day's fishing that he did not stop to look through all the windows to see if any one was coming, and before he knew it, Odin and Thor were almost upon him. There was not a second to lose. Without thinking, he threw the net into the fire, changed himself into a huge salmon, and jumped through the window into the river. It was all done so quickly that the gods hardly saw what was taking place. When they entered, the house was empty. Odin's keen eye saw the half-burned net, and he pulled it out of the fire.

"Why," said Thor, "it is a fish net. The thief always liked fishing. He has changed himself into a fish. Let us go to the river. I am sure we can find him."

"First," answered Odin, "we must finish this net. Then he will think that we have given up the chase, and we will have no trouble catching him."

The net was soon finished, and they went softly to the river bank. Loke was swimming in the deep water between two stones, and the net did not touch him. When Odin saw the net come up empty, he knew Loke was in the river's bed. So he put a big stone into the net and put it back into the water. Never had there been such fishing! Loke, seeing that the net contained a stone, knew that they would catch him unless he was very cautious, so he waited until the net was almost over him, then gave a great jump, went over the net and into the waterfall below.

When the gods saw the great fish go over they knew it was Loke, and that a hard fight was before them. Just as the fish landed on the other side, they turned the net toward the sea, and Thor waded out into the middle of the stream to hold the net steady. Loke saw that he was to have a hard fight, and again he waited until the net was over him, then put all his strength into one mighty spring, hoping it would land him into the sea. Thor was watching for him, and just as he leaped into midair, caught him by the tail.

The gods, glad that they had caught the traitor, changed him into his natural shape, took him to a high mountain, bored three holes into the rock, and chained him fast. There he remained until the last great battle of the gods was fought.

The Twilight of the Gods

XIII

THE TWILIGHT OF THE GODS

When Balder went to the unknown land, the gods knew that the end was soon to come. Slowly the trees dropped their leaves, the flowers died, the grass grew brown, and all Asgard seemed wrapped in darkness. Each morning the gods looked at each other and said, "To-morrow the Summer will come," but the next day brought greater darkness and gloom. The snow fell all Summer, and the icicles hung so thick on the eaves that you could scarcely see the houses. The hearts of the gods longed for Summer, but it never came again.

Three years passed without one bit of sunshine or the sign of even a tiny violet. Then three more years passed, of darkness and terror. In Asgard there was nothing but silence and gloom. They knew that the last long Winter had come, and they waited quietly, as brave gods and men always wait, for the last battle.

One day a shrill cry aroused them. Nothing had ever been heard like it. As they looked, a great wolf sprang into the air as if chasing the sound. The whole world seemed to awake, and all the hosts of darkness sprang into life. Loke, the Fenris wolf, and all the terrible ones were there. The gods knew that the morning of the last day had dawned, and prepared themselves for the great struggle.

I do not want to tell you about the war. You know that Odin, Thor, and the rest of the brave gods fought until the last breath. Tyr, missing his right hand, fell first. They fought from morning till noon, from noon till bloody eve. At last they were all slain.

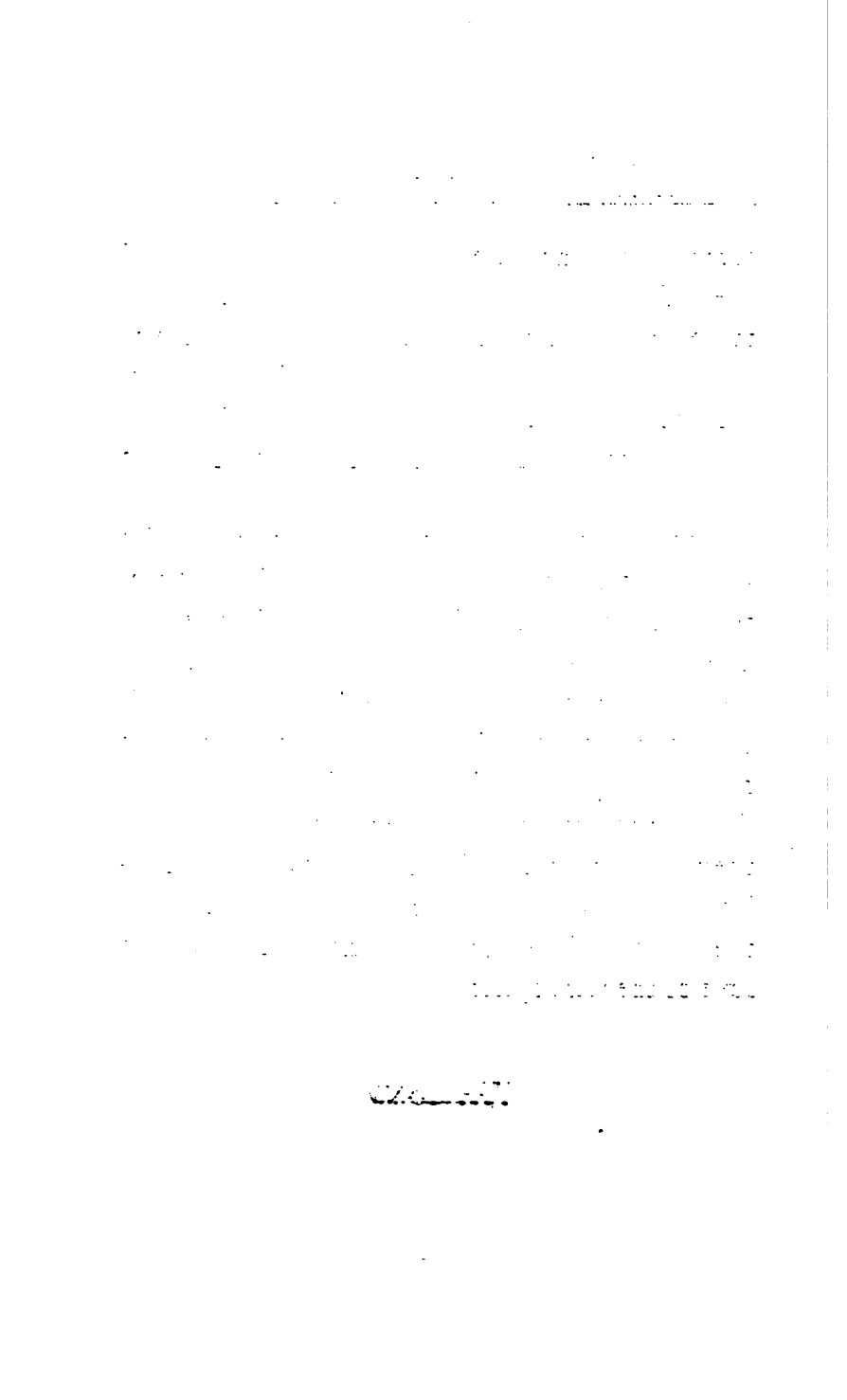
A hush fell upon the earth. Then a great heat

came over all and the whole world was a ball of fire. The giants were destroyed, Asgard was no more, gods and men were all dead, for it was evening, and the twilight of the gods had come.

Ages passed, and all was silence. No sun, moon, nor stars. No one to count time. All was quiet.

One day, a faint, rosy light appeared in the east. The sun came up, a new world was born, trees were green, and flowers bloomed as before. The good All-Father had re-built the earth. One by one the gods came back to Asgard, Tyr with two strong hands, Balder, beautiful as ever, Odin and Thor as wise and brave. The old days of fighting and conquering giants were past, though they often met to take council with the All-Father, whose wise words made peace. And so the new world lived, the gods happy in the great love of the wise spirit.

THE END



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